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Talking Points

Current State of China-Vietnam Conflict

1. The fighting which began on 17 February now appears to be over.
   - -- After seizing Lang Son on 2 March, Chinese announced on 5 March they would withdraw to "historically recognized borders."
   - -- Chinese withdrawal now almost complete, despite some interference by Vietnamese (who have also charged China with committing "atrocities" in territory it occupied).
   - -- Vietnam agreed to border negotiations with Chinese if latter did, in fact, completely pull back -- unclear whether VN will still talk with Chinese, however.
   - -- Chinese forces in large numbers concentrated just north of VN border -- fighting could resume at any time.
2. On balance, it appears that as matters now stand Chinese came out on top:
   - -- Politically, they restored credibility lost through initial failure to deter VN invasion of Kampuchea.

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-- Militarily, they "taught VN a lesson" by chewing up as many as 5 VN divisions, including 2 main force.

- VN now withdrawing some forces from Kampuchea and Laos, perhaps 30,000 men.

-- Economically, already-tight VN economy put under increased strain.

3. Fighting in Kampuchea continues.

-- Pol Pot forces holding on to countryside and stepping up attacks. Supplies appear adequate.

-- Kampucheans don't like Pol Pot, but detest Vietnamese more.

-- Sihanouk still refusing to cooperate in "coalition government" containing Pol Pot.

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4. Soviets reacted in very low key way.

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-- Soviets now acclaiming their "statesmanship" in avoiding Chinese effort to entangle them and hence impair US-Soviet relations, including SALT.

5. One unanswered question: post-hostilities Soviet role in VN.

-- For first time, Soviet warships called at Danang, Haiphong, and Ho Chi Minh City during hostilities. Have they obtained base rights? (One report says Soviets asked to set up "supply points" controlled by them.)

-- Is Vietnam now committed to even closer relationship with Soviets as result of military and other types of Soviet aid? (Soviets shipped new MIG-21s and SA-3s.)

-- Would Soviets support VN more vigorously in event of renewed hostilities?

-- Minsk plus 2 guided missile cruisers and amphibious assault transport en route to Pacific Fleet.

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